

Two Additional Heat-Related Deaths Bring Maryland Total to Ten

Governor O'Malley emphasizes continued care and caution during heat wave

*Heat-related Deaths Update***

Department of Health & Mental Hygiene News Release

BALTIMORE, MD (July 9, 2010) - Record breaking summer temperatures have contributed to the deaths of two more state residents, according to the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH). The latest report from the Maryland Office of the Chief Medical Examiner brings the total number of hyperthermia-related deaths in Maryland to ten.

The latest heat-related fatalities are a Baltimore City senior (65 and over) who died within the last week, and a Prince George's county senior who died in June. Both victims had serious underlying health conditions and were found inside their residences without air conditioning and room temperatures above 90 degrees.

"As temperatures continue to rise above 90 degrees day after day, our monitoring systems report the number of people with heat-related health issues are going to emergency rooms at ever increasing numbers as well," said Governor Martin O'Malley. "We can't stress care and caution enough during this hotter than normal Maryland summer. Go where the temperature is cool, drink plenty of water or fruit juice, take it easy and use some common sense if you have to brave the heat."

Peak temperatures are expected to dip below 90 degrees tomorrow - Saturday. Residents are urged to avoid complacency in dealing with the heat as daytime temperatures begin to rise again on Sunday, according to forecasts. Cooling Centers and services have been engaged by local health, emergency and senior services agencies throughout Maryland during the hottest days of 2010, providing an option for those who need a cool place to stay during the day.

"Heart disease appears to be a common health condition among those who have fallen victim to the heat this year," said DHMH Secretary John M. Colmers. "Anyone who suffers from a chronic illness such as heart disease, diabetes, and respiratory illnesses are at higher risk during these scorching temperatures. However, everyone can follow some simple steps to protect themselves, their loved ones and their neighbors, especially seniors. Stay out of the heat as much as you can and stay in contact with family, friends and neighbors when temperatures rise."

DHMH cautions Maryland citizens that heatstroke and heat exhaustion can easily develop from the hot and humid conditions typically associated with Maryland summers.

Heatstroke is a serious illness characterized by a body temperature greater than 105 degrees. Symptoms may include dry red skin, convulsions, disorientation, delirium and coma. Onset of heatstroke can be rapid: a person can go from feeling apparently well to a seriously ill condition within minutes. Treatment of heatstroke involves the rapid lowering of body temperature, using a cool bath or wet towels. A heatstroke victim should be kept in a cool area; emergency medical care should be obtained by dialing 911.

Heat exhaustion is a milder form of heatstroke that may develop due to a combination of several days with high temperatures and dehydration in an individual. Signs of heat exhaustion include extreme weakness, muscle cramps, nausea, or headache. Victims may also vomit or faint. Heat exhaustion is

treated with plenty of liquids and rest in a cool, shaded area. Those on a low-sodium diet or with other health problems should contact a doctor.

Hot weather tips:

- Drink plenty of fluids such as water and fruit juices to prevent dehydration -- be aware that alcohol can impair the body's sweat mechanism, as can fairly common medications such as antihistamines and diuretics;
- Wear loose-fitting, lightweight, and light-colored clothes;
- Avoid direct sunlight by staying in the shade and by wearing sunscreen, a hat and sunglasses;
- When possible, stay in air-conditioned areas. If your home is not air-conditioned, consider a visit to a shopping mall or public library. Contact your local health department to see if there are any cooling centers in your area or visit <http://spdev.dhmd.gov:21115/SitePages/Home.aspx> and click on 'Heat-related Illness and Cooling Center Information';
- NEVER leave pets or young children in a car, even with the windows cracked;
- Check on elderly relatives or neighbors at least daily; and
- Take it easy when outdoors. Athletes and those who work outdoors should take short breaks when feeling fatigued. Schedule physical activity during the morning or evening when it is cooler.
- In 2009, six heat-related deaths were reported; 2008 - 17 and in 2007 - 21.

To learn more about preventing heat related illness:

1. [Visit Governor O'Malley's Blog - Links to local Cooling Center information to manage in the extreme heat.](#)
2. [Click on DHMH's Heat-related Illness and Cooling Center Information](#)
3. Visit MEMA at www.mema.state.md.us and click on "Other Natural Disasters."